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CAPTAIN DAVE's SURVIVAL GUIDE

(Thanks Cap'n Dave)

Introduction

For too long, the term "survivalist" has called to mind paranoid separatists or white supremacists who give up the conveniences of modern society, drop out of the government's databases and live in one-room backwoods cabins like the Unabomber.

Well, Captain Dave and the good folks at the **Survival Center** know survivalists are much more likely to be Floridians buying hurricane shutters a few months before the next hurricane season, Californians preparing a three-day cache of food and water in case the next big one rocks their town or a Minnesota resident who keeps a few blankets, a pair of old boots, warm socks and a few candy bars in the car during winter. This isn't paranoia, it's just good planning. Like carrying a spare tire, even if you never need it.

But there are plenty of online resources for people who just want to prepare a three-day kit. Captain Dave's Survival Guide is designed to take you to the next level. Because in a true emergency, three days may not be long enough. We want you to be mentally, physically and financially prepared for any emergency on *any* scale.

Some Common Terms

- We define *survival* as emerging from a natural or manmade disaster in a better position than the average person. In other words, you get to keep on keeping on, while others may not.
- *Preparedness* means making preparations before disaster strikes to improve your chances of survival. Surely you remember the old saw about closing the barn door...
- *Survivalists* have a self-reliant bent and choose to prepare on their own or in a small group rather than rely on the government to help them survive.

So, how can you prepare to survive? What can you do to prepare, to become a "survivalist?" The Survival Center has developed this eight step program to help you get started. While designed as a guide for the new survivalist, it has plenty of information for the hard-core preparedness expert as well.

A warning: Captain Dave's Survival Guide contains some lengthy chapters (although we've kept graphics to a minimum to speed loading and designed each page so the text loads first). You may wish to save each chapter or print it out for reading at your leisure. And remember, in many emergencies, your computer will be inaccessible, so a hard copy of any chapters you find especially helpful isn't a bad thing to have on hand.

Chapter 1: OK, But What Do I Prepare For?

- [Questions to Ask Yourself](#)

Before you can prepare, you must determine what you are preparing to survive and how each disaster threatens you, your safety and survival. That will give you the parameters necessary for the following steps.

This initial exercise isn't tough, it only takes a few minutes of thought. We suggest you jot notes or switch into your word processor while you work.

But first, it's important to realize that you cannot prepare for everything -- only the army tries to do that, and we've yet to meet anyone with their resources. Captain Dave suggests you prepare only for those potential disasters that are likely to occur within the next five years. Sure, you may wait seven years for the next earthquake, but remember the survivalists creed: *better safe than sorry*.

What's going to happen in the next five years? If we knew, our web page would look different. You'll have to extrapolate, evaluate trends, read the newspaper, conduct your own research. At the very least, take a few minutes and consider your location. Pull out a map and look what's within a two-mile, five-mile 10-mile and 25-mile radius of your home and place of work. Put on your pessimist hat and consider what might go wrong that could directly impact you. Decide if that's something you want to prepare for (see questions one and two, below).

For example, if you live a "safe" distance outside of a flood plain, your house might still gets flooded in the 100-year flood, should you prepare for it? We would, but it's your call. It's your ass on the line, so you have to decide.

That nuclear plant 20 miles away has an excellent safety record. Should a nuclear disaster be on your list? Again, you make the call.

Are you worried about a meteorite crashing into your house? Well, it has happened, but it's probably not worth preparing for.

Finally, if you've been afraid of something since you were a child -- whether it's a raging fire or nuclear war -- prepare for it. At the very least, you'll sleep better at nights knowing you have done all you can.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. *What natural disasters or extreme conditions am I (we) likely to face in the next five years?*

Make a list and rank them in order of most to least likely to impact you. You can review our [list](#) of possible natural disasters if you need to.

Your list might look like this:

- Heavy thunder storms
 - Severe winter weather
 - Nearby flash flooding
2. *What other disasters or emergency situations might I face?*

Add to your list the man-made or other disasters that you might face in the next five years (again, you can refer to [our list](#), if necessary).

Let's say you have added these categories:

- Toxic material emission/spill (from a train derailment)
 - Riot or other civil disorder
 - Nuclear plant problems
 - Terrorism
3. *What are the ramifications of each item on my list.*

Now, take your list and create a second column (bet those of you using a word processor are wishing we'd told you this before, huh?). Put the ramifications of each disaster in the second column. What do we mean by *ramification*? How the disaster or emergency situation could affect you. Think this one through very carefully, as everyone's situation is different. For example, families with children have different concerns than those without or singles.

Finally, note if the ramifications could require evacuation (our [next](#) topic).

To keep using our example results in a table like this:

Potential Disaster

Ramifications

Thunder storm with electrical outage for 2 (average) to 48 hours (severe)

- Food spoilage possible
- Lack of air conditioning/furnace
- Damage to house or car from nearby trees
- Possible local flooding (see below)
- Local transportation impaired by fallen trees, wires
- Lightning damage/fire potential

Severe winter weather

- Electrical outage for 4 (average) to 72 hours (severe) would affect furnace operation
- Exposure problems
- Frozen pipes
- Disruption of travel, transportation
- Self or family members possibly stranded away from home
- Possible food shortages and empty shelves at local markets

Nearby flash flooding

- Local transportation disrupted
- Danger while traveling in car or by foot
- Possible loss of some utilities

Nearby train derailment

- Possible leak or spill of chemicals
- Short-term exposure problem
- Long-term cancer concerns
- Evacuation may be necessary

Riot or other civil disorder

- Disruption of commute (ala Los Angeles)
- Stranded in car or office while family is at home and/or school
- Danger of riot spreading to my neighborhood
- Danger of local kids/low lives taking advantage of situation
- Attack or threat to personal safety
- Looting and rampaging by otherwise lawful citizens
- Fire with potentially no response by authorities

	protect law-abiding citizens
Nuclear plant problems	• Reactor vessel damage could result in release of radioactive chemicals to atmosphere • Evacuation necessary
Terrorism	• Threat to safety at work and during business travel • Disruption of commerce, travel • Less personal freedom, privacy as a result of government reaction to terrorism

Once you've created a chart like the one above, you know what situations you are most likely to face and can prepare your survival plan.

Chapter 2: Bug out or Batten Down?

- [Should you Stay or Go?](#)
- [The Evacuation Plan](#)
- [Where to Go](#)
 - [The Ultimate Survival Retreat](#)
 - [Caching Goods](#)
- [How to Get There](#)
 - [Route Planning](#)
 - [What to Bring With You](#)

Should you Stay or Go?

Based on the previous section, you should have a good idea of the potential survival situations you might be facing. Now the question is whether to stay and face them or move to another -- hopefully safer -- location.

We all have a strong desire to protect what's ours. Regardless of whether you own the largest house in the neighborhood or rent a ramshackle shack, home is where the heart is, not to mention all the rest of your stuff! And Captain Dave knows you've worked long and hard to accumulate that stuff, so abandoning it and running for safety may stick in your craw.

Thankfully, there are times when saying at home makes the most sense. If you can wait out the storm, ignore the heavy snow, batten down the hatches against civil unrest or otherwise stay at home during an emergency situation without endangering yourself, it

may be your best bet. There are many advantages to staying home in a survival situation, if you can safely do so:

- The food in your refrigerator and pantry can supplement your survival stash (see the next chapter).
- If you lose power, you can quickly cook much of your food and monitor the temperature of your freezer (frozen food will usually keep at least 24 hours).
- You'll have more time to improve your home's chances of survival (move items to high ground, put plywood over windows, etc.)
- It offers shelter against most elements.
- You'll have access to all your clothing, bedding and other comforts.
- You won't suffer from boredom as much as you might in a shelter.
- You can protect your stuff from looters.

Of course, there's a downside as well:

- You could be putting yourself in unnecessary, life-threatening danger. (The fire, flood, hurricane, riot, etc. might be worse than anticipated. We've all seen TV coverage of people clinging to their roofs as the house washes down stream.)
- If you decided to evacuate later, it may be too late.
- Without heat, electricity, hot water or other services, home just isn't the same.
- There is no sense of community, unless other neighbors or members of your local survival group stay home, too. You may feel cut off and alone.
- If a mandatory evacuation has been ordered, you may be prosecuted by local authorities (although this rarely happens).

No matter how much you wish to stay at home, there are times when evacuation is the only choice. These include a nuclear, chemical or biological event as well as any impending disaster that is likely to destroy your home. For example:

- If the warning sirens on that nearby chemical plant go off at 3 a.m., you have no choice but to don your gas masks, grab your bug out bag and drive the opposite direction as quickly as possible.
- If your beach-front home is directly in the path of a Force 3 hurricane, staying put might show a surplus of guts, but deficit of brains.
- Likewise the time you spend, garden hose in hand, trying to fend off a raging fire that has already burnt out six neighbors might be better spent salvaging your valuables and items with sentimental value.

So, if the survival situations you outlined in the previous section shows several emergency situations requiring evacuation, you'll need to put together a plan:

The Evacuation Plan

There are several important elements to your evacuation plan:

- Where to go
- How to get there
- What to bring with you

Where to Go

Sure, you can head to the nearest shelter, but if sitting on cots at the local high school gymnasium or National Guard Armory was your first choice, you probably wouldn't be reading this.

You need a safe house or survival retreat in a location where the current crisis will not threaten you. The easiest way to set up a safe house is to coordinate with a friend or family member located between 100 and 150 miles away, preferably in a different setting. For example:

- If you're in the inner city, they should be in a rural area or at least a smaller town, preferably not the suburbs of your city
- If you're near the coast, they should be inland
- If you're near a flood plain, the safe house should be on higher ground.

Following these guidelines, you can be relatively sure of several things:

- Whatever disaster you are facing should *not* affect them, and vice versa. This allows you to trade off, so when they are facing a survival situation, your home can be their safe house.
- You'll be running towards something, not just away from danger.
- You can get there on one tank of gas, even if there is a great deal of traffic (During the Hurricane Opal evacuation in 1995, it was not unusual for a 100 mile trip on the interstate to take four hours).
- You won't be turned away at the inn (Hotel rooms are quickly filled, and often at inflated prices).

If you plan in advance, you can leave a few changes of old clothes, a toiletries kit, necessary prescription drugs, ammunition, some MREs or anything else you might need at the safe house. This will make your evacuation easier.

While many will find that a friend or relative's house is the easiest and most cost-effective safe house, the ultimate safe house or survival retreat would be a second residence located in a very rural location. During normal times, this survival retreat can double as your vacation home, hunting lodge or weekend getaway destination. But when the flag goes up, you

can evacuate to a safe house fully stocked with everything you need for self sufficiency.

Captain Dave's **ultimate survival retreat** would be:

- Well off the beaten track, ideally reachable by a single dirt road. This seclusion will offer you a good bit of protection. For example, you can cut a large tree down across the road to help eliminate unwanted guests.
- Not too ostentatious, so that it doesn't draw a lot of talk from locals and become a target for vandalism. Nothing wrong with a solid one-room cabin with a sleeping loft.
- Near a spring, well, stream or other natural source of water.
- Equipped with at least one fireplace or wood stove for cooking and heat.
- Within 10 to 20 miles of a village or small town where you can go (by foot, if necessary) for additional supplies, news and other contact with the outside world, should the emergency stretch into months or longer.
- Have enough arable land for growing your own vegetables and other crops.
- Near a natural, easily harvestable food source (usually wildlife for hunting or fishing).
- Provisioned with enough food to keep your family safe for at least three months, preferably a year.
- Provisioned with tools necessary for long-term self sufficiency, should it become necessary.
- Stocked with enough weapons and ammunition to defend it from small groups of marauding invaders, should it come to that.

If you are worried about **caching goods** in an unattended house, where they could be stolen, you can [cache](#) a supply nearby. While most caches are buried in hidden locations, a simple solution to this dilemma is to rent a commercial storage unit in a town close to your retreat. This has several advantages:

- As long as you have access to the facility 24 hours a day (one of those outside storage areas where you use your own lock is best) you can get to your supplies when necessary.
- It will be much easier to make a few trips to and from the nearby storage facility and your safe house than carry everything with you from home.
- It's easier to check on the status and add materials to this type of cache than one buried in a secluded location.
- In a worst case scenario, you can hoof it to the storage area, spend the night inside and hike back the next day with a full backpack.

Of course, for the ultimate protection, a buried or other hidden cache is hard to beat. The is especially true for the long-term storage of ammunition and weapons that are or may one day be considered illegal. [Here are some specifics](#) on establishing this type of a cache.

How to Get to Your Safe House

Whichever option you've chosen for your safe house, the best way to get there is by car. It's convenient (most of us have them), offers some protection, is relatively fast and allows us to carry much more gear than on foot or bicycle.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with taking a train to a safe house in a nearby city. Captain Dave is partial to boats, and even a bus beats walking, but for most, the car is our escape vehicle of choice.

While everyone chooses a car that fits their lifestyle and budget, a large four-wheel drive vehicle is the best bet for evacuating to your safe house. The bigger, heavier the vehicle is, the better. Not only do larger vehicles have greater ground clearance and the ability to ford higher waterways, they offer the most protection and carry the most gear. They also offer you and your passengers better protection in a fender-bender. When the entire city seems to be running from an impending disaster, you don't want to be stuck on the side of the road because of minor accident.

Four-wheel drive is critical if you need to go off-road to avoid accidents, road blocks or other evacuation-related snafus.

So, since an army surplus army truck is probably out of the question, a large four-wheel drive pick-up with a cap may be the best bug out vehicle available. But the fact is, whatever vehicle (or vehicles) you have at hand is the best bet.

And the old saw about never letting your car's gas tank get below half makes a lot of sense. Captain Dave also recommends keeping a couple of five gallon tanks of gas on hand "for emergencies." Even if you use it to fill your tank, carry it with you (strapped to the roof, perhaps) because you never know when you might find more. If you are very serious, you can have a second tank installed in your truck.

And while we're on the subject of cars, make sure your is in good mechanical condition.

Taking the High Road

One of the most critical factors is route planning. You should have memorized several routes to your safe house or survival retreat and have maps on hand so you can identify alternate routes around accidents or other problem areas. The routes should include:

The fastest, most direct route.

This will be your first choice when you are getting out early, before the crowds. If you're smart enough to beat the rush, predict an upcoming disruption, or just feel like being far away from any federal buildings on every April 19, you can take your main route.

A back road route.

This may be your best bet when the interstates are clogged with lines of cars all trying to leave "ground zero." Sure, it would normally take longer, but in this situation, it may be your best bet.

An indirect route.

There may be a time when you need to get away, but don't want anyone to know where you're going. There may come a day when it makes sense to go north 200 miles out of your way to end up 150 miles east of your destination. This is also the route to choose if you have reason to believe you may be followed.

What to Bring With You

Captain Dave keeps a bug-out bag in the closet. A bug-out bag is the first -- and possibly only -- thing you grab when you're bailing out. When the fire alarm is going off, for example, grab the kids, the bug-out bags and get out.

Bags, you say? Yes, bags. Each member of the family should have his or her own bug out bag.

What should you include in your bug-out bag? Ask 100 people, and you'll get 100 answers, but here's what Captain Dave suggests:

Must Haves

At least \$500 in cash, including plenty of small bills for incidentals and change for phone calls. (When the power is out, many stores can't use their cash registers and insist on either exact change or to the closest dollar.)

Nice to Have

Traveler checks. Gold or silver coins. Dimes, quarters and half-dollars minted before 1965 contain 90 percent silver. A gold Maple Leaf or other large coin may be too big for day-to-day transactions, but smaller gold coins are available.

Spare or duplicate credit cards with plenty of credit available.	A bank card for local and national ATMs. (This assumes the electricity is not out.)
A few spare checks and anything that could be used for ID if you do not have your wallet with you.	A duplicate drivers license.
A spare set of keys, including car, house, safe-house/survival retreat, storage facility, safe deposit box, etc.	You can stash a spare set in your vehicle for emergencies.
A change of clothes, preferably durable heavy-weight clothes that can stand up to abuse.	A season-appropriate jacket and other outer gear, such as gloves and hat. Clothes suitable for layering (T-shirt, flannel shirt, etc.).
A pair of old, comfortable, already-broken-in shoes that still have some good miles left in them.	A couple pairs of extra socks and at least one change of underwear.
At least a quart of water per person.	Juice boxes or pouches.
A few MREs or other easily transportable food items, including some quick snack foods.	
Prescription or over-the-counter drugs you rely on.	Unfilled prescriptions you can take to a pharmacy anywhere to be filled.
A spare pair of eyeglasses (perhaps your old prescription) and/or contacts and solutions.	A duplicate of your standard opthamalic eye-wear and/or a few pairs of daily or extended-wear contacts.
A basic first aid kit, including bandages, an ace-type bandage, aspirin or other analgesic, first-aid cream, alcohol pads, etc.	A more advanced first aid kit, including sutures, antibiotics, pain killers, etc.
A phone book listing all important numbers, including friends, family, neighbors, work, school, doctor, insurance, etc.	A cellular phone and/or CB radio.
A good work knife and/or Swiss army-type knife.	A Leatherman survival tool.

For those so inclined, a basic pistol, such as a revolver chambered for .357 or .38 special, and at least 50 rounds of ammunition.

Loaded speedloaders or magazines and a comfortable belt and holster.

Now that you know where to go, how to get there and what to bring when you leave in a hurry, you can take a look at long-term survival planning. The next chapter covers the three basics of any survival plan: Water, food and shelter.

Chapter 3: Preparing Your Basic Survival Stash

- [Food Storage](#)
- [Water Storage and Purification](#)
- [Survival Shelters](#)

If you've given any thought to survival, you know the big three -- food, water and shelter -- are the foundation of any long-term survival plan. If you prepare to provide these three items for yourself and loved ones, you're farther ahead than probably 90 percent of the public.

Many would say water is the most important of the three, but we'll address them in the order above: Food, water and shelter.

Food Storage

You may be able to survive a few weeks or even a month without food, but why would you want to? Without food, you will become weak, susceptible to illnesses, dizzy and unable to perform survival-related tasks. Sure, water may be more critical to short-term survival, but it's much easier for even the unskilled survivalist to find water in the wild (the safety and purity of the water is another story, but we'll tackle that next).

This section will deal with several key areas:

- [How much food do you need?](#)
 - [Why so much food?](#)
 - [Using and storing traditional, commercial foods](#)
- [Rotating foods](#)
 - [Baking items](#)
- [Special "survivalist" foods](#)
- [Home-made survival foods](#)
- [Hunting and gathering in the wild](#)

How Much Food do you Need?

Here's the short answer: You can never have too much food stored away for hard times.

How much is the minimum for you and your potential survival situation is an answer you'll have to come up with after reviewing the table you developed in [Chapter 1](#). (You did do that exercise, didn't you?)

Will three days of food be enough, as many suggest? Or do you need a year's worth? Captain Dave can't tell you what's best in your situation, but he suggests that two weeks or more is the *minimum* for anyone in any potential survival situation. One to three months? Now you're talking. A year? Let's hope you never need it. A year may be excessive for most, but hey, better safe than sorry (have you heard that one before?) If you're wondering how you can afford a month's worth of food, see [Chapter 7](#).

Why should you stock up on so much food if the worst you're planning to prepare for is a heavy winter storm? Several reasons:

- It may take a while for store shelves to be replenished. Think back to the heavy storms that hit the East Coast in the winter of 1995-96. 30 inches in cities such as Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia shut the city down for more than a week. And the trucks carrying supplies were stranded on the side of an interstate highway somewhere in the midwest.
- You may be asked to feed friends or neighbors. Think how you'd feel if on the sixth day of the storm you and your family were enjoying a delicious, rich, beef stew while poor old Mrs. Frugal next door was down to a used tea bag and the bread crusts she usually gives the birds? Or what if friends were visiting for the weekend and unable to return home because of the inclement weather, earthquake or other emergency?
- Food rarely goes down in price. What you buy now will be an investment in the future. If you shop carefully over time ([see Chapter 7](#)), you can lay in stores of goods on sale or at warehouse club prices.
- You will be protected from price gouging. Do you really think the last load of milk and bread into the store before the storm hits will be discounted? Shelves are often cleared out right before a blizzard or hurricane is set to hit. And food isn't the only item likely to be in short supply; one grocery chain reported that when storm warnings went out, they sold more rolls of toilet paper than there were people in the city. Batteries, bottled water, candles and other staples are also going to be in short supply (see the [next chapter](#) for more on non-food survival items).
- You will be prepared for a crippling blow to our food supply system. As I write this, many are predicting our food supply is tottering on its last legs. Whether its a drought (like we saw in 1996 in Texas and Oklahoma), a wheat blight, the destruction of traditional honey bees necessary for crop fertilization or simply the world's exploding population, they will tell you our food system is falling apart. Captain Dave will let you make up your own mind, but wouldn't a few hundred pounds of red winter wheat and other grains sealed in 5 gallon buckets make you feel better?

Let's say you decide to start small and plan to stock up a week's worth of food for your family. While the "survivalist" foods such as MRE's are a great supplement, you should be able to get by for this short a time (a week or two) on the traditional, commercial foods in your larder.

This existing food reserve should not include food in your refrigerator or freezer because you cannot count on those items remaining edible for more than a day (fridge) or three (freezer), at most. So half a cow or deer in the freezer is great, but you may have to cook, smoke and/or can it on short notice, should the power be out for a long time.

A quick examination of your cupboards and cabinets will tell you how much you need to add to ensure you have enough food for a week. If you have a few packages of pasta, some cans of vegetables, a box of crackers and a jar of peanut butter, you're halfway there. But if you have a habit of dropping by the deli every time you're hungry, or shopping for the evening meal on your way home from work (as many single, urban dwellers do), you'll need to change your habits and stock up.

A detailed list of suggestions and food storage information is available in the [Food Storage FAQ](#) but you should generally buy canned (including items in jars) or dried foods. Review our list of commercial food items and their suggested storage times when making up your personal list but keep in mind your family's eating habits, likes and dislikes. Also, remember that you may not have access to a microwave and other modern conveniences, so pick food items and packaging that can be prepared on a single burner of a camp stove or even over an open fire.

Rotation Systems

The main difference between the commercially prepared foods you buy in the grocery store and the specially prepared "survival" foods is the shelf storage. You can't store grocery store items for five to ten years, as you can with specially freeze-dried or sealed foods packed in nitrogen or vacuum sealed. As a result, if you go with a larder full of grocery items, you can't develop your food stash and walk away. You need to rotate your stock, either on an ongoing basis or every two to three months. This will ensure you have fresh food (if you can consider canned and dry food "fresh") and do not waste your food and money.

There are many systems for rotating your stock:

- Captain Dave finds the easiest is to put newly purchase foods at the rear of the shelf, thus ensuring the oldest food, which will have made it's way to the front, will be consumed first.
- You can also number food packages with consecutive numbers (a "one" the first time you bring home spaghetti sauce, a "two" the next, etc.) and eat those with the lowest number first.
- If you store your survival stash in a special location, you'll need to physically remove and replace 20 to 25 percent of it every two months

(thus ensuring nothing sits for more than eight or 10 months). The materials you remove should be placed in your kitchen for immediate consumption.

As a general rule, traditional canned foods should be consumed within a year. For cans with expiration dates, such as Campbell's soups, you may find you have 18 months or two years before they expire. But for cans without a date, or with a code that consumers can't translate, mark them with the date purchased and make sure you eat them before a year passes.

Generally, canned foods will not "go bad" over time, unless the can is punctured. But the food will lose its taste, the texture will deteriorate, and the nutritional value drops significantly over time.

If you find you have a case of canned peas, for example, that are nine or 10 months old, simply donate them to a soup kitchen, Boy Scout food drive or similar charity. This will keep them from being wasted and give you a tax deductible donation.

Baking

Simple raw materials for baking, such as flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, oil and shortening, can be assets in a survival situation. With these staple items, you can make everything from pancakes or rolls to bread and fresh fish.

For those looking for a simpler answer, mixes for muffins, corn bread and pancakes mean you do not need to add eggs or measure ingredients. These ready-made or pre-mixed ingredients can be a boon. Of course, you may need a Dutch oven or griddle for that stove or fireplace.

For long-term survival storage, honey stores for years and can replace sugar in recipes. Rather than storing flour or meal, purchase the raw grain and a hand mill. Then you can mill your own flour whenever necessary. Red winter wheat, golden wheat, corn and other grains can be purchased in 45-pound lots packed in nitrogen-packed bags and shipped in large plastic pails.

Survival Foods

Storing two to four weeks of "commercial" food isn't too difficult. But when you get beyond that, you really need to look at specialized foods prepared specifically for long-term storage. These generally fall into several categories:

- Vacuum-packed dried and freeze-dried foods
- Nitrogen packed grains and legumes
- Specially prepared and sealed foods such as MRE's (Meals, Ready-to-Eat) with a five-to-ten year shelf life

All offer one main advantage: long storage life. Some, such as MRE's and packages sold to backpackers, are complete meals. This is handy and convenient, but they tend to be expensive on a per-meal basis. Others, such as #10 cans (about a gallon) of dried items, are usually ingredients which can be used to prepare a full meal. These ingredients include everything from macaroni elbows or carrot slices to powdered milk or butter flavor. Your best bet is a combination of both full-meal entrees and bulk items.

As the name implies, MRE's are ideal for a quick, nutritious, easy-to-prepare meal. They are convenient to carry in the car, on a trip or on a hike. They have very long shelf lives (which can be extended by placing a case or two in your spare refrigerator). On the downside, they are very expensive on a per-meal basis and they do not provide as much roughage as you need. (This can lead to digestive problems if you plan to live on them for more than a week or two.)

Large canned goods, on the other hand, are difficult to transport. But if you're stocking up your survival retreat ([see chapter 2](#)) or planning to batten down the hatches and stay at home, the large canned goods are easy to store and can keep you well-fed for months. While individual cans can be purchased, most popular are sets of multiple items. These are designed to provide a specific number of calories per day (they'll recommend 1,800 per day, but you'll probably want more) for a set period of time, often three months, six months or a year. Remember, however, if you have four people in your family or survival group, purchasing a one-year supply of food will only equate to three months worth for the family.

Captain Dave recommends [purchasing](#) the largest set of these canned, dried foods your budget can handle. Then supplement the set with items tailored to you and your family or survival group. Also, MREs and MRE entrees are excellent supplements, because prepared sets of #10 cans are primarily vegetables, pasta and grains, while MRE entrees are usually meat-based.

You may also want to add a few special items, such as hard candy or deserts, to reward yourself or for quick energy. That's one area where MREs and MRE deserts can be a great supplemental item. It's pretty tough to store pound cake or brownies for several years, but the MRE makers have managed it. They also offer crackers and peanut butter, bread and some great side dishes.

While we're on the topic of supplements, don't forget to add vitamins and mineral supplements. Fruits, green vegetables and other items rich in vitamin C and other nutrients may be scarce, so a good multi-vitamin is well worth the space it takes up in your stash.

NOTE: Since the guide was written, Captain Dave has started selling long-term survival foods and other related supplies. If you are interested, please visit our [Survival Shop](#).

Home Made Survival Foods

There's nothing like a cellar full of canned goods you grew and put up. From spaghetti sauce to your own jam, canning goods is a tradition that will come in mighty handy in a survival situation.

But Captain Dave doesn't pretend to be an expert. Whenever you're dealing with canning fruits, vegetables or meats, its important to follow the latest specifics from the true experts. (OK, so maybe government isn't all bad.) See our list of links for canners and others looking to preserve food.

You can also dry, vacuum-pack and otherwise prepare food for storage. Vacuum pumps are available commercially or can be constructed in your own home. You can use them to seal dried food in mason jars and other containers.

When packing foods for storage, you want to eliminate oxygen (which is why a vacuum is so good). Bugs, such as weevils, and other organisms that can destroy your food need the oxygen to live, just as we do. That's why commercial companies who prepare survival food pack grains, cereals, pasta, beans and other food in nitrogen-filled containers. You can accomplish a similar packaging yourself by using dried ice.

Simply take the 10 pounds of noodles (or 25 pounds of rice or other dried food) you picked up from the warehouse and put them in an appropriately sized plastic bucket with a lid that can create a good seal. The add several chunks of dried ice. As it sublimates, your bucket will fill with carbon dioxide, which will displace all or most of the oxygen (since carbon dioxide is heavier, the oxygen should rise to the top and out of the bucket). Place the lid on the bucket, but don't seal it all the way until you think the dry ice has completely turned to gas. This is a fine line, since you want to seal it before oxygen starts leaking back into the bucket. Remember, as soon as you open the bucket, whoosh! the air will rush back in.

Hunting and Gathering in the Wild

Image this scenario:

A small nuclear conflict erupts in the Middle East destroying several countries and much of the world's oil supply. Airbursts knock out more than half of the world's satellite communications systems. Due to favorable weather conditions and plain dumb luck, fall-out over the United States is not life threatening -- as it is in part of Europe, Japan and the Far East -- and the EMP damage to our electronic systems is minimal. However life as we know it is disrupted as fuel prices reach \$10 and then \$20 per gallon.

Fruits and vegetables grown in Florida and California can't reach markets in other states. Corn and wheat crops are abundant, but farmers don't have the fuel to run harvesters. And those that do, fill their silos, but the grain can't reach the market. Store shelves are emptied in two days of panicked buying that sees a five-pound bag of flour go from \$1.69 to \$8.99.

The economy goes into a tailspin, and inflation reaches 300 percent in the first two weeks. You're lucky you still have a job, but you wonder how on earth you'll get there without the car.

The president tries to regain control of the country, by releasing stocks of food and oil, but it's just a drop in the bucket. In a measure of how bad things have become, he declares marshal law and nationalizes all oil, refineries and oil reserves. Suddenly, Uncle Sam is the only gas station on the block, and they're not pumping for anybody, no matter how much silver you cross their palms with. Riots break out in seventeen major cities and the national guard has to be called out. LA burns (again) as does Philadelphia. There's a national curfew and trouble makers are hauled off to camps. 60 Minutes runs a story on these concentration camps, which nobody ever admitted were in existence, but they experience technical difficulties and the broadcast is cut off in the middle of the story. FEMA becomes a four letter word.

Suddenly, the two weeks of food in your larder looks frighteningly small. You wish you had more room on your credit card, but then, smart merchants are only accepting cash. You can't wait for the few tomato plants and cucumbers you have growing in the back yard to bear. But you know it won't be enough. Winter is coming, and the papers say the utilities can't guarantee there will be enough gas or electric to heat peoples' homes.

Maybe it's time to look to nature to help feed you. That's great if you are a farmer or have five or more acres of tillable land. But if not, or if it's too late to plant crops, that means a return to [hunting, trapping](#) and gathering.

If you can identify wild plants that can supplement your existing diet, good for you. If not, better go out and [buy a few guide books](#) right away. Get ones with pictures, you'll need them. Just hope everyone else doesn't have the same idea, or berry bushes and apple trees will be stripped clean in seconds.

Captain Dave has eaten all sorts of wild plants, from salad greens he probably would have tromped over on any other day to wild mushrooms to the heads of milkweeds (properly prepared, of course). Its not his first choice, but its better than tightening the belt.

Captain Dave supports [hunting as a great American past time](#), an important tool in game management and a terrific source to supplement your traditional menu during these good times. But will it be enough to put food on the table during a survival situation? Don't count on it.

If you're a hunter, you know how crowded it usually is on opening day. Could you imagine what the local patch of forest would be like if everyone's dinner depended on hunting? How quickly would we strip this continent of all edible game? Planning on fishing? So are all your neighbors.

There are some areas of the country where the ratio of people to wildlife will still support sustenance hunting. But for most of us, that's not the case. You may be able to supplement your food supply with some game, but don't count on it.

What does Captain Dave recommend you do if the above scenario comes to play?

- At the first hint of trouble and rising prices, visit the local food warehouse and grocery stores and buy as much as you can afford. Get the 50 pound bags of rice and the 25 pound bags of flour. Use your credit cards and part of your emergency cash stash, if necessary.
- Hunker down at home and protect what is yours.
- Keep a low profile and avoid contact with others, except fellow members of your survival group. Avoid trouble and confrontations.
- Hope that within six months the country will have recovered or at least stabilized. If not, the population will probably be a lot smaller when winter is over.

Water Storage and Purification

As mentioned previously, water is probably the most necessary element for human life, with the exception of oxygen.

When planning your water resources for survival you need to deal with three areas:

- [Storing water](#)
- [Finding or obtaining water](#)
- [Purifying water](#)

Storing Water

For your in-home cache or survival retreat stash, you should count on two gallons of water per-person per-day. While this is more water than necessary to survive (except in hot climates or after strenuous exertion) it ensures water is available for hygiene and cooking as well as drinking.

Captain Dave's personal in-home stash has enough water for a week, and he lives near a stream in an area where it rains frequently!

Commercial gallon bottles of filtered/purified spring water often carry expiration dates two years after the bottling date. A good rotation program is necessary to ensure your supply of water remains fresh and drinkable (see the [previous section on food](#) for information on rotation). Captain Dave purchases cases of six one-gallon jugs, which

frequently go on sale for just under 50 cents per gallon. The heavy-duty cardboard boxes stack easily and protect the jugs from rupturing.

If you prefer to store your own water, don't use milk cartons.; it's practically impossible to remove the milk residue (ugh!). Bleach bottles are recommended by others, and although Captain Dave has never used this method, and apparently bleach manufacturers don't recommend it.

If you have a spare refrigerator in the basement or the garage, use PET water bottles (the kind soda or liters of water come in) to fill any available freezer space. In addition to providing you with fresh, easily transportable drinking water, the ice can be used to cool food in the refrigerator in the event of a power failure. Captain Dave has found that these bottles, which are clear and have screw-on caps like soda bottles, will withstand many freeze-thaw cycles without bursting or leaking. (The bottom may distort when frozen, but this isn't a big problem.) For self-storage of large amounts of water, you're probably better off with containers of at least 5 gallons. Food-grade plastic storage containers are available commercially in sizes from five gallons to 250 or more. Containers with handles and spouts are usually five to seven gallons, which will weigh between 40 and 56 pounds. Get too far beyond that and you'll have great difficulty moving a full tank.

15 gallon and 30 gallon containers used for food service -- such as delivery of syrups to soda bottlers and other manufacturers -- are often available on the surplus market. After proper cleaning, these are ideal for water storage -- as long as a tight seal can be maintained. 55 gallon drums and larger tanks are also useful for long-term storage. But make sure you have a good pump on hand!

Solutions designed to be added to water to prepare it for long-term storage are commercially available. Bleach can also be used to treat tap water from municipal sources. Added at a rate of about 1 teaspoon per 10 gallons, bleach can ensure the water will remain drinkable. Captain Dave recommends rotating the water in storage tanks every year.

Once you're in a survival situation where there is a limited amount of water, conservation is an important consideration. While drinking water is critical, water is also necessary for rehydrating and cooking dried foods. Water from boiling pasta, cooking vegetables and similar sources can and should be retained and drunk, after it has cooled. Canned vegetables also contain liquid that can be consumed.

To preserve water, save water from washing your hands, clothes and dishes to flush toilets.

Short Term Storage

People who have electric pumps drawing water from their well have learned the lesson of filling up all available pots and pans when a thunderstorm is brewing. What would you do if you knew your water supply would be disrupted in an hour?

Here are a few options in addition to filling the pots and pans:

- The simplest option is to put two or three heavy-duty plastic trash bags (avoid those with post-consumer recycled content) inside each other. Then fill the inner bag with water. You can even use the trash can to give structure to the bag. (A good argument for keeping your trash can fairly clean!)
- Fill your bath tub almost to the top. While you probably won't want to drink this water, it can be used to flush toilets, wash your hands, etc.

If you are at home, a fair amount of water will be stored in your water pipes and related system.

To get access to this water, first close the valve to the outside as soon as possible. This will prevent the water from running out as pressure to the entire system drops and prevent contaminated water from entering your house.

Then open a faucet on the top floor. This will let air into the system so a vacuum doesn't hold the water in. Next, you can open a faucet in the basement. Gravity should allow the water in your pipes to run out the open faucet. You can repeat this procedure for both hot and cold systems.

Your hot water heater will also have plenty of water inside it. You can access this water from the valve on the bottom. Again, you may need to open a faucet somewhere else in the house to ensure a smooth flow of water. Sediment often collects in the bottom of a hot water heater. While a good maintenance program can prevent this, it should not be dangerous. Simply allow any stirred up dirt to again drift to the bottom.

Finding or Obtaining Water

There are certain climates and geographic locations where finding water will either be extremely easy or nearly impossible. You'll have to take your location into account when you read the following. Captain Dave's best suggestion: Buy a guide book tailored for your location, be it desert, jungle, arctic or temperate.

Wherever you live, your best bet for finding a source of water is to scout out suitable locations and stock up necessary equipment before an emergency befalls you. With proper preparedness, you should know not only the location of the nearest streams, springs or other water source but specific locations where it would be easy to fill a container and the safest way to get it home.

Preparedness also means having at hand an easily installable system for collecting rain water. This can range from large tarps or sheets of plastic to a system for collecting water run off from your roof or gutters.

Once you have identified a source of water, you need to have bottles or other containers ready to transport it or store it.

Purification

And while you may think any water will do in a pinch, water that is not purified may make you sick, possibly even killing you. In a survival situation, with little or no medical attention available, you need to remain as healthy as possible. And a bad case of the runs is terribly uncomfortable in the best of times!

Boiling water is the best method for purifying running water you gather from natural sources. It doesn't require any chemicals, or expensive equipment -- all you need is a large pot and a good fire or similar heat source. Plus, a rolling boil for 20 or 30 minutes should kill common bacteria such as *guardia* and *cryptosporidium*. One should consider that boiling water will not remove foreign contaminants such as radiation or heavy metals.

Outside of boiling, commercial purification/filter devices made by companies such as PUR or Katadyn are the best choices. They range in size from small pump filters designed for backpackers to large filters designed for entire camps. Probably the best filtering devices for survival retreats are the model where you pour water into the top and allow it to slowly seep through the media into a reservoir on the bottom. No pumping is required.

On the down side, most such filtering devices are expensive and have a limited capacity. Filters are good for anywhere from 200 liters to thousands of gallons, depending on the filter size and mechanism. Some filters used fiberglass and activated charcoal. Others use impregnated resin or even ceramic elements.

Chemical additives are another, often less suitable option. The water purification pills sold to hikers and campers have a limited shelf life, especially once the bottle has been opened. Captain Dave considers these good for the car's emergency kit, as long as they are frequently replaced.

Pour-through filtering systems can be made in an emergency. Here's one example that will remove many contaminants:

1. Take a five or seven gallon pail (a 55-gallon drum can also be used for a larger scale system) and drill or punch a series of small holes on the bottom.
2. Place several layers of cloth on the bottom of the bucket, this can be anything from denim to an old table cloth.
3. Add a thick layer of sand (preferred) or loose dirt. This will be the main filtering element, so you should add at least half of the pail's depth.
4. Add another few layers of cloth, weighted down with a few larger rocks.

5. Your home-made filter should be several inches below the top of the bucket.
6. Place another bucket or other collection device under the holes you punched on the bottom.
7. Pour collected or gathered water into the top of your new filter system. As gravity works its magic, the water will filter through the media and drip out the bottom, into your collection device. If the water is cloudy or full of sediment, simply let it drop to the bottom and draw the cleaner water off the top of your collection device with a straw or tube.

(If you have a stash of activated charcoal, possibly acquired from an aquarium dealer, you can put a layer inside this filter. Place a layer of cloth above and especially below the charcoal. This will remove other contaminants and reduce any unpleasant smell or taste.)

While this system may not be the best purification method, it has been successfully used in the past. For rain water or water gathered from what appear to be relatively clean sources of running water, the system should work fine. If you have no water source but a contaminated puddle, oily highway runoff or similar polluted source, the filter may be better than nothing, but it's not a great option.

Once the system has been established and works, you must remember to change the sand or dirt regularly.

Beyond the Basics

- [Seven Steps for Survival Success](#)
- [Additional Steps](#)
- [The Importance of Rehearsal](#)
- [Developing a Survival Mindset](#)
- [Survival Awareness](#)

Seven Steps for Survival Success

Everyone's survival situation is different, so use these steps as a suggestion and modify them to fit your specific needs. The key is to never stop preparing. Start small and build until you consider preparedness and survival whenever you make your major decisions. Captain Dave's Survival Guide is intended as a map to guide you in this journey. Not surprisingly, the steps below follow the guide:

- Step 1: Identify the most severe threats likely to affect you, so that you can prepare for them first. (This is spelled out in [Chapter One](#).) Think of it as knowing your enemy.
- Step 2: Make evacuation plans and prepare a bugout kit for yourself and each member of your family. Not coincidentally, this is covered in [Chapter Two](#) of Captain Dave's Survival Guide.

- Step 3: Prepare a permanent survival kit for your car. This will serve you well if you need to bug out or if you are caught away from your home. There's an example of an automotive kit in [Chapter Three](#) under shelter.
- Step 4: Start building your food and water stash at home. (Food storage is discussed in depth in both the [food storage FAQ](#) and in the [food section of this guide](#). Techniques for saving money while buying food are covered below).
- Step 5: Start acquiring survival tools. These could be anything from a plastic wrench to turn off the gas to a chainsaw. A [list of tools](#) is provided as a resource for you.
- Step 6: Start expanding your knowledge base through reading and taking courses. Build a survival library. You should review our list of [survival links](#) for online resources and visit [Captain Dave's Book Shelf](#) for some good reading.
- Step 7: When you make large purchases, such as your car and home, consider its application for survival and preparedness reasons. This means avoid hurricane prone areas and stay well away from the fault line.

Additional Steps

You should be adding to your survival skills or supplies every week. Sound hard? It doesn't have to be. It could be as simple as adding a few purchases during your weekly shopping trip. Or it could mean picking up a new magazine at the newsstand. Or you could rent or buying a book or video on a survival-related subject.

Your best weapon is your mind, and reading and practicing will help polish and improve your survival skills. Some skills, such as identifying and gathering foods in the wild, are obviously and directly survival-related. Others, such as learning to weld or repair small engines, may be more of a stretch. But who's to say your future survival situation might not require someone who can weld a water-storage tank or repair a generator?

Rehearsal

Planning is important, but rehearsal is when you will test your plan and identify flaws. Rehearsal is simply pretending you are in a survival situation and acting accordingly. Here are some survival examples to try:

- Try living for a weekend without electricity. You can do this the real way by shutting of the breaker (to prevent cheating) or the easy way by just "pretending." If you do the latter, you should fine each other for violating the rules. The exercise will teach you that boiling water over a camp stove or a fire in the back yard just to make you're morning coffee can really wreck your normal morning routine. But hopefully the experience will also help you identify missing supplies, bad ideas and develop a new, stronger plan.

- Try to evacuate your family to another location (anywhere from a friend or relatives to a motel 100 miles away). Give yourselves 20 minutes to pack. Once you've reached your destination make a list of everything you forgot and then add it to your bug out bag. Once you've settled in at your destination, take a minute to think how you would feel if everything you left behind was destroyed by a fire or if everything below the second floor was damaged or destroyed by a flood. Revise your storage and survival plans accordingly.
- Go for a drive one Saturday in the fall. Pull over in a remote area (if it's safe) and spend the night there with only the supplies on hand in your car.
- Try eating only your survival foods for a weekend or even a week. This is a good one if you're ready to rotate out some of your food. It also has the added benefit of letting you identify any dishes you can't stand or to realize you need to add some spices and a cook book to your stash.

Developing a Survival Mindset

Being mentally prepared is a key to successful survival. Just as athletes can improve their performance by mentally reviewing their actions before the big game, you can improve your performance in a survival situation by reviewing your options and plans before you need them. Play scenarios through your head and rehearse your options and actions. For example:

- If you are stuck in traffic, imagine what you would do if a large earthquake struck. Where would you go? What would you do? (If you're not in an earthquake-prone area, think what you would do if you saw a huge funnel cloud heading towards you.)
- In your work place, think what you would do if an ex-employee returned to work one day a bit drunk and verbally abusive. You know he owns guns, but you don't see one on him. How do you react?
- If you're traveling out of town or in any unfamiliar area, think about what you would do if you were stranded due to a breakdown or if the area was suddenly hit by a flash flood. What would you do to increase your chance of survival?
- You're in a convenience store picking up milk and as you turn around from the cooler, you see a man holding a gun on the cashier. What do you do?

(Maybe I am being cynical, but by expecting the worse, I am never disappointed and occasionally receive a pleasant surprise. After all, we're not practicing how to survive winning the lottery or getting a promotion and a big raise at work.)

Survival Awareness

Part of developing a survival mindset is being aware of your situation. The military developed a set of color codes which Col. Jeff Cooper (a respected firearms trainer)

adapted for personal "street" survival by those who carry a firearm. Captain Dave has adapted and modified those again to pertain to survival in the broader sense:

Condition White An individual in Condition White is totally unaware that the world is an unpredictable (at best) place and that they could be put in danger by a man-made or natural disaster with little or no warning. They suffer from the misguided belief that the government will protect them and keep them safe.

Condition Yellow An individual in Condition Yellow has accepted responsibility for his or her personal survival. They have admitted that the veneer of civilization can be wiped away, catapulting us back to an era where our modern conveniences don't work. They realize that the police cannot protect them before a crime has been committed. They realize that while mankind can harness some of nature's powers, and predict some of her behavior, it cannot stand against her fury.

This individual has started making preparations to protect themselves and their loved ones from potential disasters. They monitor the news for weather-related danger or potential civil unrest. By reading this far into Captain Dave's Survival Guide, you are probably in condition Yellow.

Condition Orange You are in Condition Orange when you realize a dangerous event is on the horizon and looming closer. It could be a hurricane heading towards you, an impending snow storm or a gang of youths crossing the street on a course ready to intercept you. In condition Orange, you are preparing to survive an impending situation. This could mean filling improvised water tanks or bringing extra fire wood into the house to dry. It could be loading the car in preparation to evacuate or hanging hurricane shutters.

(Note, in some emergencies -- like an earthquake or terrorist bombing -- you may go straight from Condition Yellow to Condition Red or Black.)

Condition Red You are in a survival situation and the dangerous event is there NOW. This means the bullets are flying, or the water is rising or the wind is howling, the electricity is out and the snow is piling up. You're most important priority is to ride out the moment, to survive the immediate event. This probably means taking shelter or running or, depending on the situation, fighting back.

Condition Black In Captain Dave's version of the color code, Condition Black is after the catastrophic event, but before the situation has returned to normalcy. You still are depending on your survival stash and skills to survive, but the danger is longer term, not immediate.

Examples of condition black could be the earthquake that is over, but you can't return to your home. Or the river has crested, but it will be days before you can return home and longer before you are cleaned out. Or the riots have died down, but you dare not leave your house or neighborhood. Or the snow has stopped but the electricity has not been restored, and it will be a

few days before the plows dig you out.

Think about your worst-case scenario and determine how long you might have to survive in condition black. Remember that in a catastrophic event, such as nuclear war, a terrible plague, a comet strike or an alien invasion (people have been e-mailing me asking me why I haven't addressed the latter two) "normalcy" may only be in your memory.

Chapter 5: Survival Medicine

- [First Aid Kits](#)
-
- [Alternative Medicines](#)

Captain Dave is the first to admit he doesn't know how to remove an appendix, and he's a lot better with a fighting knife than a scalpel. But he knows how critical medical care can be in a survival situation. Food, water and shelter may be the first three items on your emergency list, but medical care should be number four.

Whether it's a bomb blast, car crash or natural disaster, medical treatment always seems to be necessary early in an emergency situation - just when it's hardest to come by. But with education, you can provide the first aid you or those close to you need. Captain Dave recommends reading and taking classes (such as those offered by the Red Cross and some EMT programs) on first aid and becoming a first responder.

An entire first aid tutorial with information on how to treat different medical emergencies is [online here](#) at Captain Dave's Survival Center.

For more advanced information, read the [Survival Medical FAQ](#), also online here. This includes specific information on antibiotics, lab tests and several medical kits.

If you don't have the time, at least store a few first aid kits in important locations.

First Aid Kits

There are dozens of commercial first aid kits available from many different suppliers. Captain Dave recommends you have on hand three different types of kits:

- A small, basic kit for you car and bug out bag.
- An intermediate kit for around the home and for traveling.
- An extensive medical kit stored with your survival gear for use when going to a regular doctor or hospital is out of the question.

While kit contents will vary, your basic kit (which most outdoors or camping-type stores should carry) should include at least the following. If you can't buy one with these contents, pick up a few supplies and create your own:

- Bandages
- Antibiotic ointment
- Gauze pads
- Iodine or similar prep pads
- Alcohol prep pads
- Butterfly bandages
- Antibiotic ointment
- Medical adhesive tape
- Aspirin and/or non-aspirin pain relievers

The intermediate kit will include more of each of the above items, plus the following:

- Larger adhesive bandages
- Smelling salts or ammonia inhalants
- Ace-type bandages for strains and sprains
- Several sizes of sterile pads
- Rolls of gauze
- Antiseptic towlets
- Thermometer
- Snake bite poison extractor
- Tweezers
- Safety pins
- Moleskin
- Rubber (latex) gloves
- Burn medication
- Anti-itch treatment
- Sun screen
- Diarrhea medication
- Eye drops
- Basic first aid instructions

Your more advanced medical kit can be expected to include not only the above, but some or all of the following:

- Special bandages, such as conforming, trauma and field dressings
- Rubbing alcohol for sterilization
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Betadine

- Scissors
- Forceps
- Scalpels
- Hemostats
- Sterile sutures, in several sizes
- Wound probe
- Mouth-to-mouth shield
- Instant hot pack
- Instant cold pack
- Prep pads
- Eye pads
- Sponges
- Cotton balls
- Burn treatments
- Dental tools
- Splint materials
- In-depth first aid/surgical guide
- Cold medication
- Decongestant
- Antihistamine
- Colloidal silver

If you can find a sympathetic doctor or have other access to prescription medicines, you should consider stocking up on a few key items:

- Broad spectrum antibiotic
- Antibiotics for sinus infections, strep throat and other common "winter" ailments
- Pain killers

Remember, if you have kids or a special medical problem, add whatever extra items you think are appropriate.

Veterinarian Supplies

We're not worrying about your pet -- although they can be injured in disasters, too -- but using easily-obtainable veterinarian supplies for your own needs, as many survival writers recommend. While Captain Dave does not endorse this position, it bears mentioning. In a survival situation, does it really matter who or what the prescription was originally written for? Use your own judgment and don't forget to read our [disclaimer](#)!

Alternative Medicines

Captain Dave has seen too much of the world not to believe that there are more ways to treat common ailments than the AMA would have you believe. And should a post-

apocalyptic world mean we have to revert to herbs and tree roots, a bit of knowledge about alternate medicines may be helpful. (A list of useful alternative medicine sites is being developed.)

For day-to-day well being, Captain Dave is partial to homeopathic medicine. This approach to healing stimulates your body's natural healing force. You can check the yellow pages for the homeopathic physician near you.

Protecting Your Stuff

If luck or planning lets your live through the immediate disaster -- the hurricane passes, the earthquake dies down or the riots are quelled -- you are faced with the longer task of living through the aftermath. All the topics we've dealt with earlier -- food, water, shelter and emergency medicine -- are critical. But you have to hang on to all four to survive, and many of those who are less-prepared may envy your stash and wish to make it their own. See the [scenario](#) we put together for an example.

You need to protect yourself both from those who see the situation as an opportunity to cash in and those who are so desperate they have no way to survive except by taking your stuff. You will run into the first (criminals) early in a long-term survival situation. The second will be a later phenomenon, after their meager supplies have petered out and the hand of government is nowhere to be found.

There are several steps you can take to protect yourself from these and others who threaten your survival:

- Keep a low profile. The fewer people who know you have a huge stash of food and water, the less who will turn to you. This also means don't flaunt it and create resentment. Don't be boiling beef stew in the afternoon over a backyard fire when others are starving and not expect trouble. Instead, use a camp stove in your fireplace late at night.
- Do not seek to profiteer from your advanced planning. This will result in resentment and possible retribution. If you have a surplus and wish to part with some goods, you will earn friends by giving it away or selling it at cost. If you sell it at ridiculously high prices, you'll earn nothing but hate and resentment. (Frankly, Captain Dave feels your better off keeping or using surplus items for trade.)
- After disaster strikes, post signs saying looters will be shot. Like an alarm sign, this won't deter someone who seriously wants what you have, but it may send potential thieves and looters to easier targets. During "normal" times, there is an unfortunate liability associated with displaying "Protected by Smith & Wesson" bumper stickers and wearing T-shirts that boldly proclaim "I don't dial 911, I call on .357." In the potentially lawless aftermath of a disaster, Captain Dave believes the benefit of such a sign will outweigh the liability.

If you are threatened by looters or other criminals, you probably only have two choices: Turn tail and run or display a firearm you are prepared to use. This latter technique served Korean merchants well in the L.A. Riots. If you choose to include weapons as part of your survival stash (a move Captain Dave encourages) you *must* have the will and the skill to use them successfully. Otherwise, you'd probably have been better off taking option one and hightailing it out of there, giving up your stash but hopefully saving your life.

Your Survival Weapons

Choosing the best survival weapons will depend on your needs. Do you wish to protect yourself from a single intruder or a large group? Will you be engaging targets at close or long range? Do you wish to hunt as well?

Your answer may be "all of the above," which is why Captain Dave recommends the following survival weapons:

- One or two pistols for every adult or adolescent capable of using it. Should be at least .38/9mm caliber or larger.
- A 12 gauge shotgun for all large adults. 20 gauge for smaller-statured adults. Either semi-auto or pump, the higher capacity the better. Stock both bird shot, buck loads and slugs.
- A semi-automatic battle rifle, such as a AR-15, FAL, H&K, AK-47, SKS or Ruger mini 14. At least one for every two adults capable of firing it. An AR-15 is preferred because it has ammo and parts interchangeability with our country's standard issue weapon.
- A large scope-equipped rifle capable of engaging man-sized targets 400 yards or more.
- Stock up on high-capacity magazines and ammunition as well. Captain Dave recommends a minimum of 10 high-capacity magazines and 1,000 rounds for your "battle" rifles. Additional ammunition is a good idea. If you do not need to use it, it can be an excellent barter item.

This is a good firearms stash that, used properly, can help you protect yourself in many situations. You will be able to carry the pistols concealed if you are not expecting imminent trouble but wish to be prepared. The shotguns are excellent close-quarter combat weapons, ideal for defending your home. The .223 rifles are not only intimidating, they are able to sustain a high level of suppressing fire and provide both offensive and defensive fire. The large hunting or sniping rifle (in 30-06, .308, 7mm or a similar caliber) is good for hunting and reaching out and touching someone.

Suppose you only have a pistol and a .22 rifle. Well, you're better off than many. There's a good bit of truth to clichés like "better a hit with a .22 than a miss with a .45." Hopefully, just the visible presence of a firearm will be enough to quell any problems.

Heavy Weapons

Owning fully automatic weapons and other "weapons of destruction" such as grenades and rockets is illegal for the average citizen. While you may be able to obtain a class III firearms license, the process is difficult and the weapons expensive. That means most of us will need to rely on home made weapons.

Captain Dave recommends Molotov cocktails, which can be made by mixing gasoline with detergent. He does not recommend experimenting with home made explosives.

For those interested, [TEOTWAWKI](#), a survival novel, discusses ways to take out tanks and other heavy vehicles.

How Can I Afford All This?

The truth is, not many of us can afford to go out and spend thousands of dollars on survival equipment. Forget about the fully-stocked hideaway and the loaded four-wheel drive you need to get there, how can you afford a good solid stash of food?

But even if you had all the money necessary, you can't buy everything you need, learn everything you'll have to know and prepare for "the big one" in a day, a week, or even a year. Preparedness is a lifetime journey, and your mental attitude is a key component. The best approach is to start small and build your resources. As time passes, re-evaluate and add to your plan, your stash, your skills and abilities. (See [chapter 4](#) for more information)

Buying Smart

After shelter, food and transportation are frequently the largest expense a family faces. Buying a few extra months of food can be a burden. But by shopping wisely and adding to your food stash over time, you can make this less expensive.

OK, the following may not be news to you, so if you feel you're doing a pretty good job of buying groceries inexpensively, feel free to skip it. But I figure everyone may gain a kernel of knowledge, so it's your call:

One of the best resources for large quantities of food is warehouse club stores, such as Sam's, and food co-ops. You can also purchase grain and other supplies from farm supply stores and wholesalers. This may take some searching out, but can be worth while if you want to buy bushels of grain to preserve yourself.

Warehouse Club

In Captain Dave's experience, warehouse club stores generally offer large sizes of items that can be used for survival. While it is sometimes possible to get better buys on some items when they go on sale at the grocery store, you have to shop carefully and watch the circulars to catch them. At the warehouse club, prices are constant and sizes large.

In addition to the survival-related foods you can acquire here, you may save enough money by buying at the club stores to afford some of those 45-pound kegs of red winter wheat you've been admiring in the catalog. Just be careful and don't buy so much it spoils, or your savings will evaporate.

Some purchases Captain Dave has made for his stash include:

- 25- and 50-pound bags of rice. A staple in many countries, it could be yours during the bad times. Rice is one of the few foods that no one has allergies to, plus it is an excellent source of nutrients. And let's face it, most of us don't live where we can grow rice. Check out the [Food Storage FAQ](#) for information on how to preserve rice.
- 25-pound bags of flour. Although grains are better to store than flour, this is fine if you do a lot of baking already. You can bake your way through the bag and always have some ready in an emergency.
 - 5-pound bags of complete pancake mix. These are great because all the ingredients are ready to go, just add water (Make sure you get complete, you don't want the kind where you have to add eggs.) Muffins and other mixes are

also available, but it's a lot easier to cook pancakes over an open fire or camp stove than muffins!

- Number 10 cans of powdered potato flakes. OK, so they don't taste as good as the real thing, but they store a lot longer and whip up fast. And if you want, you can still pick up the 50 pound bag of potatoes. I've seen these for \$5 at flea markets and such. But the powdered stuff won't grow eyes.
- 5-pound bags of elbow macaroni and spiral noodles. These are a staple around here, so we always keep a couple bags on hand. Much cheaper buying them in bulk than the tiny boxes on grocery store shelves.
- 5-pound canisters of peanut butter. A favorite for kids and adults, plus you don't need refrigeration. Don't keep 'em forever or they could go rancid, but a good product to rotate in your every-day pantry. Add some crackers to your stash, too.
- Number 10 cans of canned vegetables or beans. I really don't look forward to the day I have to sit down and eat nothing but canned peas or corn or whatever. But they are generally much cheaper than the small grocery-store cans, which would barely make a meal for one person. They won't keep as long as freeze-dried veggies packed in nitrogen, but they're good for feeding yourself and the hungry neighbors. To ensure rotation, use these for summer picnics or donate them to the homeless shelter every year or so.
- Number 10 cans of chili. We all know beans are a good source of protein, and a hot bowl of chili, which usually combines meat and beans, will keep you working for many hours.
- Six-packs of canned goods, including pasta, vegetables, meats. You may grimace to think you'll be living on canned Beefaroni or Spam, but there just aren't that many canned meats, and they're a heck of a lot cheaper than MRE's. Some of the pasta-products come in larger cans, too.
- Large boxes of powdered milk (makes 20-quarts). These' won't last too long (see the [Food Storage FAQ](#) section on powdered milk), but if you are buying powdered milk, you can realize substantial savings over grocery store prices. A good item to keep in your spare refrigerator.
- 120 13-gallon trash bags. I could probably come up with a whole web page dedicated to 1001 uses for plastic bags. But you'll just have to use your imagination. From storing water to lining your emergency potty, you'll need them.
- Pouch noodles. I swear ten years ago these were available only in backpacking stores, but now Lipton and others make them for the time-challenged family. Just add water, boil and voila: pasta Alfredo, shells in creamy garlic sauce or garden rotini. These are small sizes and this is one product where you can definitely get a better buy during a sale at the grocery store.

- Pouch and box drinks. These are great for bug-out packs and survival stashes that could be subject to freezing and thawing. My experience has shown the pouches will freeze and thaw throughout a winter stored in the car, but try it yourself in the freezer before you take my word on it. Every brand could be different.
- For those with a large freezer or a large family, 5-pound blocks of cheese, 10-pound packages of frozen hamburgers and large quantities of frozen vegetables are often good buys. If the you-know-what hits the fan, you'll just have to eat a lot of hamburgers for the first day or two.
- Paper products, cleaning supplies, candy and personal care products are also available in large quantities at reasonable prices.

OK, so what's the down side, you ask? Usually, warehouse stores offer one brand, so you may not get the exact product you want.

Canned Foods

Let me digress a moment for a comment about canned goods. Traditional canned goods aren't the best for survival because they lose their food value over time. But Captain Dave thinks they have a lot going for them nonetheless. They are cheaper and easier to obtain than specialty foods such as MRE's or freeze-dried foods. They also can be heated in their cans. Remove the lid (You didn't forget to pack a couple of can openers, did you?) and plop them carefully on the burner or stove, and the can becomes an instant pan. Also, you can drink the juice off vegetables to preserve your water reserves (as long as it isn't too salty). Plus, you can get a wide variety of foods, and cans are a lot tougher than glass.

So let's say you get an inside scoop that North Korea is going to invade South Korea in the next two days and you are worried about the use of nuclear weapons in such a scenario. You decide to high tail it off to your shelter before it's too late. Do you call the 800 number and order a dozen cases of MREs and wait for the UPS man to show, or do you hightail it to the store and clean all the canned goods off the shelf? If you have a survival stash which already includes survival-type foods, these canned goods will be a nice addition and provide some much needed variety. Don't forget canned fruits and vegetables.

Discount Groceries

Somewhere between the traditional supermarket and the Warehouse club lie discount grocers. This could be the "Super Kmart" that carries groceries as well as just about anything else you need. There are also Food4Less and similar stores that are a bit like warehouse clubs, only they don't carry anything except food. Becoming a careful consumer and a survival-shopper may require visit to all three types of stores over time.

Food Co-ops and Farmers Markets

Food co-ops can be found in the yellow pages. While some require you to work, most allow you to purchase as non-working members at a slightly higher price than the participants. Others require that you order in advance so you can share in their volume purchasing

Food co-ops often make large purchases of fresh vegetables, nuts, grains and similar supplies. Many times, these are organically-grown, so you are benefitting health-wise as well as financially.

Some farmers markets are seasonal, usually around only during the growing season or only on Saturdays, but others are permanent. If you put up canned goods, there's nowhere better to make large purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables. Whether you're looking for tomatoes or peaches, this is the next best thing to growing your own.